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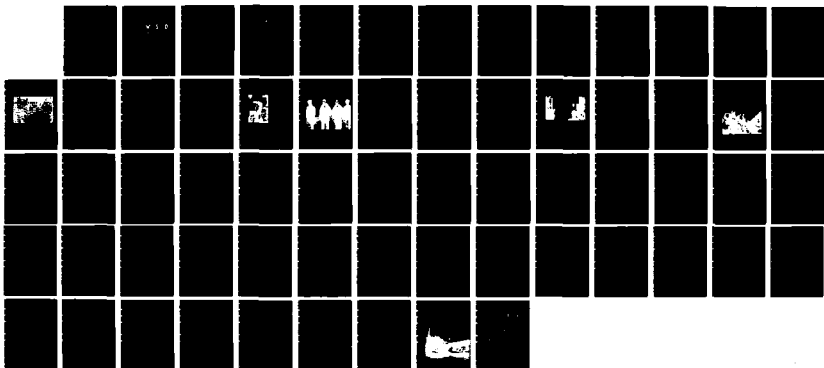
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# AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

## STUDENT REPORT

COMBAT LEADERSHIP:  
56th FIGHTER GROUP 1943-1944

MAJOR THOMAS L. LENTZ 86-1525

*"insights into tomorrow"*

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**REPORT NUMBER** 86-1525

**TITLE** COMBAT LEADERSHIP: 56th FIGHTER GROUP 1943-1944

**AUTHOR(S)** MAJOR THOMAS L. LENTZ

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**SPONSOR** UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, DR. RONALD H. SPECTOR

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for graduation.

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<p>This project preserves the memoirs of three successful combat leaders and aces for future leadership study. Colonel Hubert Zemke, USAF (Ret), Colonel Francis S. Gabreski, USAF (Ret), and Colonel Walker M. Mahurin, USAF (Ret) each responded to survey questions about combat leadership in the 56th Fighter Group from 1943-1944. Their candor provides invaluable historical insight into successful combat leadership.</p>					
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## PREFACE

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The 56th Fighter Group was the most successful American fighter group in the European Theater of Operation. Their 679.5 aerial victories, the most in VIII Fighter Command, produced 47 aces. Three of those aces held different levels of command within the group. These three aces were surveyed to examine their perspectives on combat leadership. Their responses produce insightful memoirs of combat leadership from the top down. In turn, these memoirs provide a valuable historical perspective for study and development of future combat leaders.

A special thanks to three--common men with uncommon insight--whom I respect intensely. Without their help this project would not have been possible:

Commander of the 56th Fighter Group from 1943-1944--Hubert "Hub" Zemke, Colonel, USAF (Ret).

Commander of the 61st Squadron and America's leading living ace--Francis S. Gabreski, Colonel, USAF, (Ret).

Flight Commander in the 63rd Squadron and author of Honest John--Walker M. "Bud" Mahurin, Colonel, USAF, (Ret).

Finally, thanks must go to Lieutenant Colonel Dave McFarland and Lieutenant Colonel Robert Gregory for their expertise and assistance with this project. And, I should also thank my wife, Patje, for her infinite patience with me and my demanding typing requirements.

This material is being submitted to the faculty of the University of Alabama in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Military History.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Major Thomas L. "T.C." Lentz holds a B.A. degree in Secondary Education from the University of Wyoming and will complete degree requirements in May 1986 for an M.A. in Military History from the University of Alabama. During his Air Force career, he has flown the T-37, T-38, CT-39, and OV-10 aircraft in ATC, TAC, MAC, and PACAF. His varied assignments include a remote tour to the 51st Tactical Fighter Wing, Osan, Korea, as the Chief of Flight Safety. Major Lentz authored an article describing the hazards of mountain and canyon flying entitled, "Lessons Learned the Hard Way," which was published in the August 1978 TAC Attack. Prior to his assignment, in 1979, to Squadron Officer School he was a Forward Air Controller assigned to Bergstrom AFB, Texas. Major Lentz and his wife, Patje, have four children.



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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

It is, indeed, an observable fact that all leaders of men, whether as political figures, prophets, or soldiers, all those who can get the best out of others, have always identified themselves with high ideals.

Charles de Gaulle

The leader has to believe in his men, and have that belief reciprocated: he has to be able to inspire them to risk their lives for some greater end which they may only very dimly perceive, and he has to have himself the courage to demand that they do so. It is of course in this particular that military leadership differs from other kinds.

James L. Stokesbury, Military Leadership

It is the contention of the author that in combat, with all other variables reasonably equal, it is the men and their leaders that make the difference. One combat unit that undoubtedly had the right leadership was the 56th Fighter Group. From 1943 to 1944, that leadership made the 56th the most successful American fighter unit in the European Theater of Operation. This paper will examine combat leadership in the 56th to determine what leadership traits made the group so successful. Three of the many traits attributable to leadership suggested by Charles de Gaulle and James L. Stokesbury are certainly: high ideals, a reciprocating belief in your people, and courage. However, with no universally accepted definition of combat leadership, this paper relies on the combat experiences and memoirs of three of the 56th Fighter Group's leading combat aces to define, in their own words, combat leadership.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

During World War II, what combat leadership traits made the 56th Fighter Group so successful against the Luftwaffe in the European Theater of Operation from 1943 to 1944?

## OBJECTIVES

The major objective of this paper is to provide an historical perspective of the 56th Fighter Group's combat leadership. Specifically the author will attempt to:

1. Determine the success of the 56th Fighter Group, in relation to other 8th Air Force fighter groups, against the Luftwaffe.
2. Investigate combat leadership traits by surveying three of the 56th Group's leaders and aces from 1943 to 1944.
3. Analyze this information to determine what combat leadership traits made the 56th so successful, and preserve this data for future Air Force leaders.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PAPER

The history of the United States Air Force is filled with examples of leadership role models. For example, during World War II historians chronicled the men who planned and led the daylight bombing raids into the continent of Europe. The focus of this paper will be on the men that successfully escorted those bombers; specifically, three effective leaders and aces of the 56th Fighter Group.

## ASSUMPTIONS

This paper will expand the knowledge of successful combat leadership as applied in the European Theater of Operation during the Second World War.

Additionally, the lessons learned and shared by the leaders and aces of the 56th Fighter Group will provide future Air Force leaders with an invaluable educational experience on what it takes to fight and win.

## SCOPE

This paper will deal with combat leadership in the 56th Fighter Group from 1943 to 1944. The majority of the information presented in this study came from two sources. The first was from unclassified unit histories on file in the United States Air Force Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. The second source was unpublished

survey responses from three of America's top aces and leaders during World War II:

Colonel Hubert Zemke, as commander of the 56th Fighter Group, had 17.75\* aerial victories.

Colonel Francis S. Gabreski, America's leading living ace, was credited with 28\* victories to lead all pilots in the VIII Fighter Command.

Colonel Walker M. Mahurin finished his 56th Group tour with 19.75\* aerial victories. (He had one additional World War II victory in the Pacific.)

To facilitate comparisons of fighter groups, only aerial victories will be used to determine the top unit, although VIII Fighter Command did allow both aerial and ground victories to count. This was done because as many or more aircraft were lost in the hostile low altitude environment of flak and ground fire.

The top combat aerial victory group was the 56th. Its closest rival, the 4th Fighter Group, finished second in aerial victories but (by most accounts) first in combined total of air and ground aircraft destroyed.

Finally, the 4th Group's transitions from the RAF and Spitfires [as an Eagle Squadron] to P-47's and ultimately to P-51's were compared to similar activities within the 56th. In the complex environment of combat leadership, these comparative events balanced out and were not a significant factor.

#### ORGANIZATION

Chapter Two examines the successful historiography of the 56th Fighter Group from 1943 to 1944; and compares that success against other 8th Air Force fighter units, specifically the 4th Fighter Group.

\* These are recognized official totals from the USAF Historical Study #85. (Gabreski and Mahurin would add to their totals in Korea.)

Chapter Three focuses on three combat leaders and aces of the 56th. The 56th's commander from 1943 to 1944, Colonel Hubert Zemke, was touted as the leader of the "Wolfpack". Colonel Frances S. Gabreski, the leading living American ace, served as the 61st Squadron Commander in the 56th. Finally, Colonel Walker Mahurin, while assigned to the 63rd Squadron, occupied formal and informal leadership roles within the group.

Chapter Four examines the survey responses of three combat leaders and aces of the 56th Fighter Group. Colonels Zemke, Gabreski, and Mahurin answered questions ranging from unit leadership positions to combat leadership traits displayed within the 56th.

Analysis of these responses in Chapter Four draws the conclusion that combat leadership made the 56th successful against the Luftwaffe in the European Theatre of Operation from 1943-1944.

The final chapter looks at the lessons learned from the combat leadership of the 56th and their relevance to future leaders in the Air Force.

## Chapter Two

### THE 56th FIGHTER GROUP 1943 - 1944

Cave Tonitrum  
'Beware the Thunderbolt'

There were no brass bands, no Red Cross volunteers handing out coffee and doughnuts, no theatrical farewells. There was no audible excitement of any kind at 3:00 A.M., January 6, 1943, when the pioneering 56th boarded HMS Queen Elizabeth....The next morning we awoke at sea, as we did for the next five days. There was no convoy. We travelled alone--all twelve thousand of us....On the morning of the 11th, someone shouted that we were being attacked by enemy aircraft. In a mad dash to the rails, we looked up to see several pre-war RAF biplanes which had come out to shepherd the Queen to shore. The next afternoon, January 12, 1943, we all squeezed onto a tender and disembarked at Gourock, Scotland. Again, no brass bands--not even the native wail of a bagpipe--to herald the arrival of the first P-47 trained Group in the European Theater of Operation.

#### History of the 56th

The next 3 months were spent training, organizing, and acclimating for the battles to come. On April 6th, 1943, the 56th settled into Horsham St. Faith, a permanent RAF station near Norwich, England. From Horsham St. Faith the 56th flew its first combat mission on April 13, 1943.

The VIII Fighter Command [part of 8th Air Force] was still taking lessons from the RAF and our first mission was in conjunction with a much larger force of Spitfires on a fighter sweep over the Hump of France into the lair of the famous Goering yellow-nosed fighters.

"the Abbeville Boys." In addition to the Spitfires, one squadron of 12 aircraft from the 56th was to rendezvous over Debden with similar formations from the 4th Group from Debden and the 78th Group from Duxford. An uneventful fighter sweep of St. Omer area was accomplished, with not a single enemy aircraft sighted. (10:5) However, this was soon to change.



The route followed on their first mission, a high-altitude sweep of the Calais area.

On April 29, 1943, the 56th flew its first operational combat mission on which enemy aircraft were encountered. On May 4, 1943, in conjunction with the 4th Group, the 56th conducted its first escort mission. They escorted 54 B-17 Fortresses whose target was the engine factory at Antwerp, and engaged four FW-190s that were attacking an RAF Spitfire. "Although this first escort mission yielded no claims, it began that long process of trial and error through which the Group became expert in the tactics and

technique of fighter escort. For the primary task was always to be, how best to protect our 'Big Friends' against enemy interference." (10:6) Just how well they protected their "Big Friends" was cited by war correspondent Andrew Rooney, "...the B-17 boys could tell,...figures don't give the number of Fortresses that are still operating by the grace of Colonel Zemke and his fighter pilots." (9:ii)

The 56th continued to fly out of Horsham St. Faith until July 9, 1943, when they moved operations to the "muddy airfield and tin huts" of Halesworth, England. After 9 months they went to Boxted, England, where they remained until the end of the war.

Organized into three squadrons, the 61st, 62nd, and 63rd, the 56th Group was about the size of a small town, with 250 officers and 1,500 enlisted men. First commanded by Colonel Hubert Zemke from September 1942 to October 1943, then by Colonel Robert B. Landry while Colonel Zemke was in detached service to the United States for war bond drives. After 3 months of war effort rallies, Colonel Zemke returned to command the 56th in January 1944. Colonel David C. Schilling, one of the last original members of the 56th Group, became its commander on August 12, 1944, when Colonel Zemke took over the 479th Fighter Group.

Between its first mission on April 13, 1943, and its last combat sortie on April 12, 1945, the 56th flew 447 combat missions over enemy-occupied Europe. The majority of these missions were flown as bomber escorts, fighter sweeps, dive-bombing, or low-level strafing. During this 2 years of combat against the Luftwaffe, the 56th Fighter Group produced 47 aces--pilots with five or more aerial victories. Referred to as the "Airport of Aces", (8:23) the Group's final tally of destroyed enemy aircraft was 1,006.5. Of these, 679.5 were shot down in the air in aerial combat, and 327.5 were destroyed on the ground. The half victory resulted from an aircraft "shared" kill. Even so, by November 5, 1943, the 56th became the first fighter group in the European Theater of Operation (ETO) to reach the 100 figure. On February 22, 1944, the 61st Squadron, under the command of Lt. Col. Frances S. Gabreski, became the first squadron in the VIII Fighter Command to destroy more than 100 enemy aircraft. Then on Independence Day, 1944, the 56th became the first group in the 8th Air Force to chalk up 500 "kills." The following day Lt. Col. Gabreski got his 28th aerial victory to establish a new high scoring record for American pilots in both the European and Pacific theaters. During the same month, the War Department authorized the 56th its first Distinguished Unit Citation, the first fighter group in the VIII Fighter Command to



receive this award. On Christmas Day, 1944, the Group celebrated by knocking down eight more enemy aircraft to become the first fighter group in Europe to pass the 800 mark in enemy aircraft destroyed.

In addition to its enemy aircraft destroyed records, the 56th also had other firsts. They dropped the first highly effective spike bombs in the ETO on August 18, 1944; fired the first rockets from VIII Fighter Command fighters on August 17, 1944; and the Zemke "Fan" was first seen on May 12, 1944. The "Fan," a tactical flying formation, evolved to increase bomber protection. Basically, according to Colonel Zemke, "we would place ourselves in position with the bomber box, then fan out to engage the enemy before they could set up to attack our bombers." (19:--)

The closest rival for the distinction of most aerial victories was the 4th Fighter Group. There were 15 fighter groups in the VIII Fighter Command, three of which, the 56th, the 4th, and the 78th, began P-47 operations in April of 1943. (Appendix D) Prior to this date, the 4th Group had already tallied more than 50 aerial victories as an Eagle Squadron with the RAF.

Despite the experience of the pilots flying with the 4th Fighter Group, enemy kills came slowly...56th Fighter Group, dubbed the "Wolfpack" had clawed down 300 German aircraft by the time the 4th had racked up its 150th kill with the P-47. When the 4th Group was re-equipped with Mustangs on February 26, 1944, the American race for high scoring group honors started in earnest. (5:119)

However, by the end of the war, the top aerial victory groups of the ETO were as follows: the 56th Fighter Group--679.5; the 357th Group--595.5; and the 4th Group with 549 aerial victories. The 4th Fighter Group did finish with 1,015 total aircraft destroyed in the air and on the ground while the final tally for the 56th was 1,006.5 in both categories.

## Chapter Three

### COMBAT LEADERS--THREE "WOLFPACK" ACES

The final tabulations on V-E Day showed that in the European Theater the AAF had lost 11,687 airplanes while destroying 20,419 enemy aircraft--of which 9,275 were destroyed by the three fighter wings of the 8th Air Force. The US Army Air Forces emerged from the slaughter as the "largest and most effective striking force the world has known" and the 8th Air Force had played a deadly, effective, and vital role in bringing to pass the final Allied triumph.

Gene Gurney (1:186)

The VIII Fighter Command, part of the 8th Air Force, had three wings with five groups per wing. (Appendix A) Two groups in the 65th Wing, the 56th and 4th Fighter Groups, each destroyed over 1,000 enemy aircraft. Their totals have long been the subject for debate as to which group was the top scoring unit in the European Theater of Operation (ETO). Unchallenged is the 56th Fighter Group's claim as the number one group in aerial victories. (Appendix B)

The 56th Fighter Group shot down 679.5 aircraft in the ETO to lead all American units in this department. The Group fought from April 13, 1943 until April 25, 1945, flying 19,391 sorties in this period. They lost 145 aircraft and suffered 150 casualties. [The 56th's ratio of 8 victories to 1 aircraft loss was the best in VIII Fighter Command.] The Group produced a covey of aces, many of them the ETO's most famous pilots. Gabreski, Schilling, Zemke, Robert S. Johnson, Gerald W. Johnson, Donovan Smith, and "Bud" Mahurin were among the stellar performers passing through the 56th at one time or another. (5:145)

Three of the stellar aces of the 56th, Zemke, Gabreski, and Mahurin, also excelled in their different levels of leadership responsibility. Colonel Zemke was the commander, or 'wheel'\* as the troops called him, of the 56th Group while Colonel Gabreski was the 61st Squadron Commander; and Colonel Mahurin was a flight commander in the 63rd Squadron. (Appendix C)



Left to right:

Aces: Colonel Hubert Zemke  
Francis Gabreski  
Bob Johnson and  
Bud Mahurin

Between them they destroyed  
110 enemy planes on the  
ground and in the air.

Three combat aces, three levels of leadership, three unique perspectives on combat leadership. To ascertain their perspectives, each individual was surveyed on the impact that the Group's leadership had on the "Wolfpack's" legendary aerial success. (5:153) To more effectively understand their responses to the survey, it would help to know the backgrounds of the three selected leaders and aces.

\* "Wheel, in Army lingo, meaning either rank or big-shot..." Thomas R. Henry, The Chicago Sun, June 7, 1944

Part I COLONEL HUBERT "HUB" ZEMKE  
56TH FIGHTER GROUP "WOLFPACK" COMMANDER

The Zemke Outfit--This is the story of the top-scoring US Fighter outfit operating against the Luftwaffe. They have a will to win that can't be beaten--and a flying 29-year-old Colonel more colorful sitting at a desk than a trapeze artist is between swings.

Andrew A. Rooney, (9:ii)



The leader of the 56th "Wolfpack", Hubert Zemke, (left) is escorted by Dave Schilling, Francis S. Gabreski, and Fred J. Christensen. When Gabreski was captured by the Germans, this photo graced the walls of Hanns Scharff, the Luftwaffe's master fighter interrogator, much to the consternation of Gabby. Two months later Zemke joined the POWs and saw the photo too.

Born in Missoula, Montana, of German parentage in 1914, Hubert Zemke attended grade school, high school, and college in the same small town. A long standing family tradition of military service underscored his easy transition to ROTC at the University of Montana. "In the University my grade point average was 2.6 or about a C+. In short, don't put me in a category of literary genius." (18:2) His 3-year football and boxing scholarships, part time employment, and assistance from his parents paid for his schooling. Active in the Sigma Nu fraternity, he had a minor role on the Interfraternity Council and as an elected board member of the Druids (a Forestry Club). "In no sense of the word did I go steady with any one gal but played the field. As such, I thoroughly enjoyed University--but believe, except for my athletic ability, I ran as any other student--in the middle of the pack." (18:3) Colonel Zemke majored in Forestry but, due to the depression, deferred to the military. His Professor of Military Science and Tactics urged him to apply to the US Army Flying School at Randolph Field, Texas. His military career began with graduation from US Army Air Corps Advanced Flying School, Kelly Field, Texas, in February 1937. Colonel Zemke's Instructor, Lt. C. Stadler, wrote on Zemke's graduation evaluation that he was a "good, solid pursuit pilot--somewhat conservative pilot--somewhat mechanical to begin with but possesses good fundamental coordination. An attentive student, well suited to discipline and qualified to take on responsibility." (18:3) His first assignment was as a Flying Cadet at Langley Field with the 8th Pursuit Group. During that time he resisted the temptations of \$400 per month with the airlines, a transfer to notoriety in the bombardment wings, and offers of \$500 per month to fly in Spain or China. His planned objectives were to obtain a Regular Commission and be a "better than average pursuit pilot." (18:5) Flying 20-30 hours a month in P-12s, P-6s, PB-2s, P-36s, and P-40s honed his flying proficiency. By 1940 he had functioned as the 8th Pursuit Group Armament Officer, Flight Commander, and Squadron Adjutant. After his transfer to Mitchell Field in the winter of 1940-1941 as the 8th's Group Material Officer, he was selected in February 1941 to fly the P-40 Tomahawk with the RAF in England. He remained in England, checking out in Spitfires, Hurricanes, etc., until late June 1941 when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. He was then shipped to Archangelles, Russia, on the first supply convoy for the Soviets. He, along with Lt. John Allison, checked out Soviet pilots on P-40s. By February 1942, with the US in the War and his work with the Soviets finished, he returned to Mitchell Field, Long Island. Upon his return he found rapid changes in the military as the country prepared for war. Mobilization and expansion found Colonel Zemke moving through numerous brief assignments. From checking

out 60 Chinese Nationalist pilots in the P-40 to a squadron commander position in the 80th Fighter Group, he was anxious for action. He finally convinced the Army that as an aviator that had seen two battle fronts, England and the Soviet Union, he was best suited for an operational position. His persistence paid off with an assignment in August of 1942 as the Commander of the 56th Fighter Group.

Known as the "fightingest" commander in Europe, Zemke always preferred to personally lead the Group on their combat strikes. (1:171) He became an ace on October 20th, 1943, when on patrol over Emden, Germany, he shot down an Me-109.

Soon after attaining his ace status, "Hub" returned to the United States with then Major General Curtis LeMay. The 2-month tour of the US was for war bond rallies and lectures to combat crews. While on this tour, Colonel Zemke received orders assigning him to Headquarters 1st Air Force, Mitchell Field, New York. "These orders were published without the will, consent, or understanding of Colonel Zemke and caused him to go AWOL [absent without leave]." (13:2) He used his "bond tour" trip ticket to return to England where General Spaatz was approached to straighten out the situation. The General revoked the orders and Colonel Zemke was returned to command of the 56th Fighter Group.

On August 12, 1944, he was transferred to command of the 479th Fighter Group, VIII Fighter Command--then the youngest, lowest scoring group in the Theater. The 479th was equipped with P-38s at the time, later to be equipped with P-51s. On August 15th, Colonel Zemke led the Group on a strafing mission against Nancy/Essay Airdrome, France, where 43 aircraft were destroyed. This exceeded the accumulation of all scores that the 479th had been able to acquire up to that date. While leading the Group to the east of Arnheim front, an equal number of enemy aircraft FW-190s and Me-109s were encountered just north of Hamm. "In the historic 30-minute battle, 27 enemy aircraft were destroyed without a loss, to establish an ETO record. In this battle, Colonel Zemke destroyed two and damaged one." (13:4) On October 31st, while escorting B-24s to Hamburg, Germany, Colonel Zemke flew into a weather front, and attempting to recover from a high speed spin, lost the right wing of his aircraft. He bailed out in the vicinity of Celle, Germany. After three days of evasion, he was captured by German civilians and turned over to Luftwaffe authorities. "In POW camp he again proved to be an inspiring leader." (4:178) Colonel Zemke was the senior Allied officer at Stalag-Luft One at Barth, Germany, when "they stopped the fight" in 1945. (4:178)

After the war, Colonel Zemke was assigned as Executive Officer of the Air Proving Ground Command at Eglin Field, Florida. Then in January 1946 he was the Director of Tactics to the Air University, Air Tactical School, Tyndall AFB, Florida. At Tyndall he "taught Combat Leadership from the podium." (19:--). He left Florida in January 1949 to command the 36th Fighter Group (F-80s) Furstenfeldbruck, Germany. From here he moved to Chief of Staff, 2nd Air Division, Landsberg, Germany, then as Assistant Director of Operations and Training, Headquarters USAFE, Wiesbaden, Germany. In August 1952 he was a student at Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. After a Pentagon tour as Director, Operational Planning Division, Director, Operations he went on to command the 31st Fighter Wing (F-84Fs), the 40th Air Division (F-84Fs), and then the 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Laughlin AFB, Texas.

In December 1957 Colonel Zemke was Secretary, NORAD Staff, Headquarters NORAD, Ent AFB, Colorado. After a tour as Chief, USAF Air Section, MAAG-Spain from 1959 to October 1962 he was assigned as Commander, Reno Air Defense Sector, Stead AFB, Nevada.

Today, Colonel Hubert Zemke is retired from the USAF and owns and operates the Z.Z. Almond Ranch near Oroville, California.

PART II COLONEL FRANCIS S. "GABBY" GABRESKI  
61ST FIGHTER SQUADRON COMMANDER

A trio of aces in the 56th Fighter Group, Hubert Zemke, David Schilling, and Francis S. Gabreski, gave the Germans a great deal of trouble and caused the Germans to nickname them "The Terrible Three."

Gene Gurney (1:168)



Gabreski with pointer briefing next mission.

Colonel Gabreski, one of the "terrible three," was born on January 28, 1919, in Oil City, Pennsylvania. A "hale and hearty" son of Warsaw immigrants, he attended elementary school and high school in his home town, graduating in 1938. Not an early aviation enthusiast nor with any great interest in academia, he followed in his brother's footsteps by enrolling in Pre-Medical study at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. He left school in July 1940 to enter Army pilot training at Parks Air College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. After basic pilot instruction Gabreski was assigned to the Southwest Air Training Center and graduated from the flying cadets in March 1941. He was then shipped to Wheeler Field, Hawaii, in the 45th Fighter Squadron of the 15th Fighter Group. He was at Wheeler when



the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. In October 1942 he returned to the US and was assigned to the 56th Fighter Group as a flight leader. After the Group's arrival in England in January 1943, Gabreski was immediately detached to the 315th Polish Spitfire Squadron of the Royal Air Force (RAF) for tactics training and flying Spitfires. From their station at Northolt, he flew 13 combat missions with the 315th to German-occupied territory. In February 1943 he returned to the 56th Fighter Group as B Flight Commander in the 61st Fighter Squadron. He took command of the 61st in June and was promoted to the rank of major on July 19, 1943. On August 24th he was credited with his first enemy aircraft destroyed, an FW-190. And on November 26th he reached ace status when he downed a pair of Luftwaffe Me-110s near Oldenburg, Germany. In early January 1944, Gabreski was made Deputy Operations Officer for the 56th, but resumed command of the 61st in April. He was credited with his final victory on July 5, 1944, when he destroyed an Me-109G. On July 20th, almost a year after his first victory, Gabreski went on what was to be his final mission before returning to the US.

Leading his squadron on a strafing mission against a German airfield near Coblenz, he suddenly felt his plane lurch as the propeller touched a slight mound in the field. With the propeller bent he was unable to climb directly above the airfield for sufficient altitude to bail out. "The flak was so heavy that rather than take a chance of getting hit, I ran the plane into the ground at well over 200 mph, kicked the right rudder which gives the wings the shock and climbed out without a scratch." [He crash landed near Bassenheim airfield.] He was captured five days later by German farmers. When he was brought before a German interrogation officer, the Nazi nappily crowed, "Hello, Gabby! We have been waiting for you for a long time." (1:169-170)

After his liberation from Stalag-Luft One in April 1945, he returned to the United States as the third highest scoring combat pilot with over 166 combat missions. Gabreski's 28 victories were recorded in only 11 months. He was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal, and foreign decorations including the Polish Cross of Valor, the Belgium Croix de Guerre, and the British Distinguished Flying Cross.

After his liberation from the prisoner of war camp in May 1945, Colonel Gabreski returned to the United States and

was assigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, as Chief of the Fighter Test Section. At this time, he attended the Engineering Flight Test School qualifying him as a test pilot. He remained in this capacity until April 1946, when he separated from the Air Force to accept a position with the Douglas Aircraft Corporation in California.

In April 1947, Colonel Gabreski was recalled to active service and assigned as Commanding Officer of the 55th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group, Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. He served in this capacity until September 1947, when he entered Columbia University under the Air Force Educational Program to study the Russian language and political science.

In August 1949, Colonel Gabreski was reassigned to the 56th Fighter Group at Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan, as Commanding Officer. In June 1951, he was assigned to the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing in Korea and later as Commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. While with the 51st, Colonel Gabreski became history's eighth "Jet Ace" on April 1, 1952.

Colonel Gabreski returned to the United States June 16, 1952, and was assigned to the Office of Inspector General, USAF, at Norton Air Force Base, California, where he was Chief of Combat Operations Section; and later assigned to Headquarters, 9th Air Force, Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, as Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations. In the summer of 1956, he was assigned to Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, South Carolina, as Commander of the 354th Tactical Fighter Wing. After 4 years at Myrtle Beach, Colonel Gabreski was assigned to command the 18th Tactical Fighter Wing, F-100 Unit at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa.

In 1962, he was selected by General Emmet O'Donnell to be his Executive Officer at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. In the summer of 1963, the Colonel assumed the post of Inspector General for the Pacific Air Forces. His last assignment before retiring from the military was Commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing at Suffolk County Air Force Base, New York, from August 1964 to November 1967.

Colonel Gabreski's combined score of enemy aircraft destroyed during World War II and the Korean conflict stands at 37.5, making him the top living air ace in the United States today.

PART III COLONEL WALKER M. "BUD" MAHURIN  
63RD FIGHTER SQUADRON FLIGHT LEADER

Mahurin doesn't feel like a hero. He is just a fellow, at 25 a bit older than most of his mates, who is trying very hard to do a good job and who takes pride in his accomplishment. He is gallant and debonair enough, in his short-belted aviator's jacket, all shiny with wings, decorations, and six-guinea flying boots from Piccadilly. But there's no swashbuckler there.

But he doubtless will be judged a hero by the folks back home, for America loves its stars. It is already, up to the spring of 1944, fighting its war over Europe with an All-American varsity. And Bud Mahurin happened to be the first high scorer of that team.

Hickman Powell (10:115)



A laughing "Bud" Mahurin (second from right) poses with other "Airport of Aces" pilots.

Bud Mahurin took his first airplane ride with his father in Fort Wayne, Indiana, when he was 12 years old. Although he never forgot that ride, he also "wanted to be a fireman, a railroad engineer, or even--as strange as it may sound--a businessman." (3:109) After high school graduation he wanted to go to Purdue University and become an engineer. However, lack of funds required creative financing. Bud's plan was to work for a year, then go to school for a year; at this rate he could finish college in 8 years. In 1937 the nation's periodicals were full of stories concerning the international situation, and the United States Army Air Corps had stepped up the campaign to recruit cadets for Randolph Field. He concluded that this appeared to be a solution to his educational dilemma.

If I could get in one year of college,  
I could take civilian pilot training, and if  
I could manage another year of college, or  
pass an equivalent mental examination, I could  
join the United States Army Air Corps and  
graduate within a year as a second lieutenant.  
After 3 years of active duty I could resign  
and fly for an airline. (3:112)

By the fall of 1941, through a combination of regular classwork, night school, and makeup exams, Bud was ready to apply to the Army Air Corps. In September 1941, he received instructions to report to the Primary Flying School at Wilson-Bonfils Field, Chickasha, Oklahoma. After two and a half months of primary school, in the Fairchild PT-19s, he was transferred to Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas.

Randolph was supposed to be the best  
there was, and though it was called the  
West Point of the Air, I hated the place.  
The base was beautiful, our uniforms were  
unique, and we flew the best training aircraft  
in the world--the BT-14, built by North American  
Aviation; yet the hazing of cadets, the rigorous  
schedule, and the deadly routine, made Randolph  
a 3-month nightmare. (3:115)

After his disappointing selection to bombers he was sent to advanced school at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas. There he flew the AT-17, AT-9, and the AT-6, a North American single-engined trainer more advanced over the BT-14 he had been flying. The day before graduation all the cadets lined up to receive their bomber assignments. It turned out, however, that every cadet over 5'10" went to bombers and those under that height went to fighters. Bud Mahurin was 5' 9 1/2"--fighters after all.

Assigned to the 56th Fighter Group, he first had to checkout in the Curtiss P-40. That checkout proved to be an eye-opening experience for the new second lieutenant.

When my turn came I taxied out to the end of the runway with two other P-40s ahead of me to wait my turn to take off. My feet fairly danced on the rudder pedals with anxiety. To put it mildly I was scared to death. The first of our trio applied the throttle to his machine and ran right into a mechanic's stand,...The pilot next to me applied his throttle and started down the runway, only to ground-loop into the center of the field, spinning like a top. Then it was my turn. I managed to get airborne, and once in the air all I could think was, My God, how will I ever get this monster back on the ground?....That first flight convinced me that I wasn't fooling around with toys, that I'd better get to work and really learn my profession. (3:117)

He did get busy. While others buzzed New York City, golf courses, or beaches, Bud stayed close to home working at his flying proficiency. That effort, from extra flying, to reading intelligence reports, even to simulating deflection shooting, paid off on August 17th, 1943 when he shot down two FW-190s. These were the first of his 20.75 total victories. His last victory would come on March 27, 1944, while leading A Flight of the 63rd Fighter Squadron. His mission was to provide heavy bomber escort on a raid to Tours (about 150 kilometers southwest of Paris.) Enroute, he spotted an enemy light bomber, flying at low altitude (about 15,000 feet separation). He began his attack from astern into the German tail gunner's fire. With oil on his windscreen he pulled up so as not to overrun the aircraft, then settled behind the enemy once again to finish him off. The German Dornier-217 went down while Bud prepared to leave his disabled aircraft. He evaded capture with the aid of the French underground, and made his way back to England; however, following standard procedures, he was restricted from further combat in Europe. Mahurin tired quickly of War Bond drives in the United States, and leaped at an offer to fly combat with the Third Air Commando Group in the Pacific. He ended the war as a P-51 squadron commander, having achieved 19.75 aerial victories in Europe and an additional "kill" in the Pacific. Furthermore, he had the unique distinction of being forced to bail out in both theaters! When the Korean War erupted in 1950, it offered him the opportunity to escape a desk job in the Pentagon. Initially

assigned on a 90-day temporary tour to Korea, Colonel Mahurin scored 3.5 victories flying the F-86, with Colonel Gabreski's 51 Fighter Interceptor Group, and was appointed commander of the 4th Fighter Interceptor Group. In this capacity, he loaded bombs on his F-86s as part of a plan to lure Communist MiGs into a trap. With bombs falling around their airfields, the Communists launched and fell prey to the waiting American Sabrejets. On such a sortie in May 1952, Mahurin's aircraft was hit by ground fire and he was forced to crash-land in North Korea, where he was taken prisoner and kept in solitary confinement for 16 months. Upon returning to the United States, he was assigned to Air Defense Command until 1956. (3:296)

Resigning his regular commission to join aerospace industry, Mahurin became a member of the active Air Force Reserve with various duty assignments in Air Defense until he was appointed Vice Commander with the 42nd Troop Carrier Wing flying C-119s. This Wing eventually was transferred to Military Airlift Command where Mahurin became combat ready in the C-124.

## Chapter Four

### COMBAT LEADERSHIP ---- SURVEY AND RESPONSES

Not history but the source material  
on which history rests; it is a memoir,  
a first-hand account by air leaders  
who flew, fought, and commanded tactical  
air forces in combat.

Richard H. Kohn (11:1)

The purpose of the survey was to focus the project participants on combat leadership; specifically to preserve their memories of the 56th Fighter Group and examine the possibility of a correlation between combat leadership and combat success. Chapter Two provided the basic historic background on the 56th and gave credence to its claim as the most successful group in the European Theater of Operation (ETO). Chapter Three chronicled the three surveyed aces--each a successful combat pilot in his own right as well as a leader in three separate levels of command. The six survey questions and responses are as follows:

QUESTION 1. What formal and or informal leadership roles did you have in the 56th Fighter Group from 1943-1944?  
Purpose: The answers to this question will supplement historical records as well as help the participants focus on their leadership roles.

Colonel Zemke: I was exposed to numerous minor leadership roles or experiences in the first 5 years of my service. With about 2,000 hours of flight experience and first-hand account of the war game exposure [British and Russian Air fronts] I firmly believe I had a much better idea of what war and wartime command was all about, than the average junior pilot. [He goes on to suggest that as an "average bloke" his contributions to the command of the 56th Group were his youth, plenty of pent-up energy, early acceptance of responsibility and work, early indoctrinization to discipline, exposure to a variety of experiences and tasks, definite early goals, which were attained in due time, and dedication to the tasks at hand.] My squadron commanding officers were Major F.G. McCollom 61st Fighter Squadron,

Major David C. Schilling 62nd Fighter Squadron, and Major Phil E. Teekey 63rd Fighter Squadron. (Appendix C)

Colonel Gabreski: I spent most of my time as a squadron commander of the 61st and a group combat leader while in the 56th. Formal or informal leadership rules (sic) did not exist in the 56th Fighter Group.

Colonel Mahurin: Please remember that my recollections of World War II came from the perspective of a captain fighter pilot who was a mere flight commander with the 56th Fighter Group. I was made major just before I was shot down in France on March 27th, 1944. My answers to your various questions come from that perspective. However, they are tainted by following experiences as a squadron, then group commander during World War II and then a group commander during the Korean War. In regard to my leadership roles during 1943-1944, I was essentially a flight leader who occasionally led a squadron. I was made a flight leader some time after reaching England when the 63rd Fighter Squadron began to grow in size, due to the influx of new pilots. My experience in leadership consisted mostly of trying to train the members of my flight, although none of us had any actual combat experience, before we actually arrived in England. To summarize about leadership roles, I flew as a flight commander most often. I began to lead the squadron as I accumulated victories. I was never assigned to lead the Group because there were too many men who were senior to me leading the Group. While I was in the 56th Group, it seemed that either Colonel Zemke or Dave Schilling mostly led, although a man named Loren G. McCollum led before he was transferred to another group.

QUESTION 2. What leadership traits or characteristics were displayed in the 56th during your association with the Group? What were the three most essential traits displayed by the pilots, flight leads, and commanders of the 56th Group? Examples. Purpose: To examine each man's definition of leadership and explore any similarity or commonality of leadership traits associated with the 56th Fighter Group.

Colonel Zemke: Three leadership traits [are] aggressiveness, fighter aircraft flying skills (above average), and a desire to excel--or personal drive.

Colonel Gabreski: The 56th, like any other group, had aggressive pilots and pilots that just went for the ride. Fortunately, the Group had better than its share of



excellent pilots who showed traits of excellent combat leadership.

The 61st Squadron and the 62nd Squadron displayed aggressive leadership while the 63rd Squadron went for the ride in the early months of combat. They lacked the motivation of the squadron commander. However, with experience, Walker Mahurin broke out of the pack and motivated his flight through his aggressive leadership to become one of the high scoring flights in the Group.

To answer your question as the most important traits displayed by pilots, flight leads and commanders of the Group, I would break down the answer from the top down.

The Group commander must have a positive attitude about his mission and Zemke did have an aggressive, positive attitude. He led the Group in combat and was determined to do his best to destroy the German fighter before the Hun got to the bombers. He and Dave Schilling were always thinking in terms of outguessing the enemy tactics. As an example, the Luftwaffe strike force would form well in advance of the bombers. And in numbers of a hundred or more, fighters would execute their head-on attack on the bombers. This was devastating to the bombers.

So the 56th learned its lesson well. The next mission the 56th Group would precede the bombers by about four minutes--this gave us enough lead time to move into the gaggle of German fighters before they had time to form their battle formation for their attack on the bombers. The Group was very successful in breaking up the formation of fighters and destroyed an untold number in the process. [the Zemke fan]

This is only one example to indicate changing tactics and strategy. And this was a constantly changing process throughout the war.

I had the utmost respect for the ability of my wingmen as well as the element leaders. Many times they were responsible for getting me home. Just to give an example of teamwork and combat leadership, I would like to cite one instance where Hub Zemke was firing on an Me-109 while behind him was an Me-109 coming in on Hub for the kill. At this moment, Bob Rankin flying as element leader saw the Me-109 sliding in behind Zemke and before the Hun opened fire Lt. Rankin slid behind him and gave him a short burst that was centered into the cockpit of the Hun, and shot the aircraft off Hub's tail. Hub destroyed his target and so did Bob Rankin. We later learned that the Luftwaffe pilot

that Bob Rankin shot down was Gunther Rall, one of the top leading German aces. General Rall lost one of his fingers that was hit by a 50 cal. shell fired by Rankin in his short burst.

[Gunter Rall retold this same story during a joint lecture with General Chuck Yeager at Air University in November, 1985.]

How important is teamwork, air discipline, professional ability, judgment, courage, aggressiveness?

The answer is quite obvious and if anybody is looking for a simplistic answer to a very complex combat situation, [he] is going to be bitterly disappointed.

Colonel Mahurin: In regard to leadership traits, as I recall Hub Zemke was a very taciturn person who showed little emotion. He seemed to have an organized mind, and always seemed to have the facts of each mission in mind before he briefed. I don't ever recall any strategy sessions where we traded ideas or views of tactics although I seem to recall that we usually were told what flack to expect where and were given intelligence information regarding where the enemy fighters had flown in making intercepts on our bomber formations. Hub was especially demanding when it came to staying with the bomber formations because that was the dogma of the period. We hadn't learned from the Germans that it was virtually impossible to provide adequate support for the bombers and that we should have gone after the fighters wherever they were. As it was, the Germans would go through our formations shooting, dive away and then come back again and again.

Dave Schilling, on the other hand, was a flamboyant individual who was quite handsome. He had an engaging personality, seemed to be full of life, and had all the attributes we normally associate with a devil-may-care leader. All the pilots liked him and he would normally be surrounded by younger pilots at the bar or in officers' clubs most of the time. Dave usually didn't seem to have the details of our missions exactly in hand when he led, but his briefings were sort of on a "Let's go get 'em" type. He would come into the briefing hut with maps, guns, and flying gear flapping in the breeze, read the operations order while trying to memorize what it said and then dash out after the briefing on his way to his aircraft. Usually, the missions he led were just as unorganized as his briefings. We would end up landing at airfields all over England when returning from a mission and our formations would all go to pot just about the time we reached the bomber formations. The bottom

line, though, was that the pilots would have followed him anywhere.

Farther down, my first squadron commander was yellow. He never seemed to see enemy aircraft although we were flying right through the middle of them. Whenever the enemy was called in over the radio, he would generally say "Where are they? I can't see them." As I recall, he didn't go on many missions initially and for sure the squadron didn't get into combat when he did. I know that I used to call in the enemy time and again and when he didn't respond would take my flight into the attack. At the time there were actually hordes of German fighters in the air attacking our bombers. Still he didn't see them. When he was transferred, the squadron operations officer (who in those days was second in command) was made squadron commander. He was even worse. Completely yellow. He not only didn't see the enemy aircraft, but kept his mouth shut about it. This man flew a complete tour in England during a time when there were German fighters everywhere and didn't score a single victory. The only thing he didn't do was to abort missions frequently like a number of other pilots did. In summary, throughout my life, I have had no use for either of these men. Why they were allowed to command escapes me. I am sure that Hub Zemke had to know all about them because it was so obvious. But nothing was done.

An essential element of leadership is that one has to want to do it. Remember that this is not a game...this is death. A leader has to have something inside him that makes him forget death and remember victory. He has to have character that is recognizable on the surface. He has to put personal traits aside in favor of the broader whole. He has to take chances while trying his best to protect the people following him by not leading them into jeopardy. I would best liken it to "gang loyalty." When the leader sees that his own people are being hurt by the enemy and then can judge the time to leap in to protect them, then his fellow pilots will follow. I would guess that the bottom line is that the fellow pilots have faith that the good leader will get them there, get the job done, and then get them home in one piece. For any individual in any part of this game the bottom line is once again, "You have to want to do it."

I don't remember too much about Gabby during those days because he was in a different squadron. By the way, all our squadrons were located in different areas so we didn't have too much social contact. When I got shot down, Bob Johnson was equal to me in victories, but I don't recall where Gabby was in numbers of enemy aircraft shot down. I would presume that he wasn't close at the time.

QUESTION 3. In your opinion, why did the 56th shoot down more aircraft than any other unit in the 8th Air Force (Fighter Command)? What affect did competition with the 4th Fighter Group (the 2nd leading group in aerial victories) have on your success. Purpose: To collaborate the documented successes of the 56th while focusing the memoirs on how they became so successful.

Colonel Zemke: We trained more (on the ground and in the air). Seriously, I believe we studied more how to defeat the enemy than many other fighter groups. In short, we changed our tactics, sprung new surprises on the enemy, studied deeper on intelligence than did other groups. The effect of the competition with the 4th Group--excellent! They [the 4th] started with a carryover of 55 aerial victories; they were blessed with living on a permanent RAF station with steam heated buildings, etc. They received the first P-47s, the first P-51s--the first this and the first that. Purposefully, we who lived in tin huts and [on] muddy [air] fields were envious. In short order they became our target--which we overcame.

Colonel Gabreski: One of the more important keys to success is teamwork. To acquire teamwork in a unit you must train and fly with the men. And the largest unit where you work together constantly flying together is the squadron. The commanding officer (C.O.) gets to know his men and their ability and, of course, the pilots get to know the C.O. They either respect his ability and position or his position alone.

In my case, I worked hard flying with the pilots of the squadron to know each and every pilot's strong points and their weaknesses. I worked on their weaknesses and capitalized on their strong points.

As any combat pilot will agree, in combat it is very important to have a most competent wing man and a professional element leader. I chose the best. Bob Johnson was my wing man and later became an element leader based on his pilot proficiency. He knew his airplane. He was truly a professional fighter pilot. He had another great attribute that only a very few gifted pilots have--excellent eyesight. His peripheral vision was outstanding. He could see aircraft long before anybody else would spot them. That was an indispensable quality of any good fighter pilot.

That's probably one good reason that the 61st was the highest scoring squadron in the Group. In addition to Bob, I had Gerald Johnson. Gerald was every bit as good as Bob was. I would only add that Gerald Johnson was about the

best shot that we had. He had all the makings of a top gun. Gerald had about 22 aircraft destroyed before he was shot down.

To shoot down enemy aircraft you must be given the opportunity. Being the first group to arrive in England, naturally we were given the opportunity. With time we gained experience and being the most experienced fighter group in the 8th, the fighter command scheduled the fighters of the 56th at a point where the fighting was apt to be most severe and the bombers most vulnerable. As new groups arrived in the theater, the 56th was still scheduled to escort the bombers on penetration to targets where the opposition was the greatest.

What effect did competition with the 4th have on our success? Absolutely none! With time, each squadron had its aces to motivate each other. The 62nd had Christiansen and Dave Schilling; the 63rd had Walker Mahurin; and the 61st had Gerry Johnson, Bob Johnson, Gabreski, Rankin, Klibbe, and many others.

Colonel Mahurin: There was a variety of reasons why the 56th Fighter Group was so successful during World War II. First, we were the first organization to be assigned the P-47. At the time we were stationed close to the Republic Aircraft Corporation facilities at Farmingdale, Long Island. This meant that we could contact the factory whenever we had questions. This we frequently did. In our view the company test pilots had done a very poor job and not too much was known about the P-47. It was very tail heavy, it could rapidly reach compressibility in a dive and it had a variety of electrical problems associated with flying at high altitude. Regardless, I believe each pilot went to England with more than 200 hours in the aircraft. Since we all got about 200 hours in flying school, we were relatively well trained depending on what each individual pilot did when he was doing flying training. More about this later. We had received little aerial gunnery and slightly more air-to-ground gunnery, but none of us could hit anything to speak of because the training just wasn't practical.

At the time we began to receive our P-47's in England, the 4th Fighter Group was also being equipped with the aircraft. This came as a great disappointment to them because they had been flying Spitfires and getting into the huge cockpit of the P-47 was a disgrace to them. They never took to the aircraft at all, and were among the first to be re-equipped with the P-51 when it reached the theater. Another group, the 78th, was also being re-equipped with the P-47, having flown P-38s upon arrival in England. As I

recall they had a rather checkered career with the P-38, trying to escort the very first B-17 raids into Europe and their combat record was spotty to say the least. As they received P-47s their P-38s went to Africa. Still, they were not happy with the P-47 either because they felt the two engines of the P-38 were a safety factor not realizing that the Germans could out perform it in almost every way. The 56th pilots, however, were happy with the P-47 probably because we didn't know any better.

The fighter air battle at the time was pretty much confined to penetrations a short distance inland from the English Channel because the British fighters didn't have much range and we were not yet equipped with external fuel tanks. All the Germans had to do was to stay out of our range in making attacks against the B-17s and we couldn't reach them. In the meantime the British were making uneventful fighter sweeps over the low countries, so there wasn't much to shoot at. All that began to change when we started to escort the B-17s within our range. The first escort mission I went on, went to Antwerp and all three P-47 groups were involved. However, we didn't have any tactics to speak of, but we did run into German fighters. By the way, on the first several missions the 56th ran, we suffered what we thought were heavy losses. One of our leaders shot down a Spitfire by mistake but we lost several flight leaders and a couple of element leaders before we scored victories.

The main thing was that we had confidence in the P-47. We discovered early on that it could take a lot of punishment and still bring us home and at the same time it could dish out a lot of punishment if we could just get to the Germans. We had longer range than the Spitfires and seemed to take the Germans by surprise before they would break away from attacking the bombers thinking that there were no Allied fighters present.

It seemed to me that each time we were able to penetrate deeper into enemy held territory we were able to score a few victories, especially when we were escorting the bombers. Because we had more time in the P-47, we were assigned the task of providing fighter escort for the front end of the bomber stream and this is just where the Germans went in to attack. The other fighter groups would come along after us and usually the air battle was all over before they got to the area where attacks had been made. All of this was just because the Germans held off attacking when they thought our fighters were in the vicinity, choosing to wait till the bombers were unescorted before attacking them in great numbers. Of course, as this phase

of the air battle progressed, the RAF gradually fell out of the picture because they couldn't get in to where the action was. They disputed our claims because they didn't see enemy aircraft themselves...they just didn't have the range.

We soon began to try out external fuel tanks. The first were built by the Republic Corporation. They were great huge bath tub looking things that bolted onto the bottom of the aircraft. They caused so much drag that they didn't do a whole lot for range, but they were a step in the right direction. We could do escort just a little bit farther toward Germany and thus ran into more Germans. There was really very little way to trick the Germans. Our bombers became more massive in formation and the number of escort fighters grew by leaps and bounds. The 56th usually got the good positions at the front of the stream so we were in a position to score. Eventually, we got the 108-gallon external tanks (made of paper) that were more aerodynamically efficient and thus extended our escort penetrations even further.

Because of our successes we were the first group to get water injection kits for our engines. I was one of the first pilots to get this. Just to describe the difference, my aircraft would indicate 320 miles an hour on the deck without water and 360 on the deck with water. For several minutes (about five) it would really help performance all around. We also got paddle bladed propellers which helped absorb the additional horse power. Finally we got armour piercing incendiary ammunition which was a great advantage over the older stuff. Of course, the other groups got these things too, but we got them first and by that time we had a number of pilots who were quite successful in shooting down Germans.

I don't remember any special competition feelings about other groups except that we were always curious as to why the Eagle Squadron had so few victories with Spitfires before they transferred to the Army Air Corps. Not only that, but they lost a lot of pilots. It may have been that the British accepted people with lower standards of flying than we did but I have always attributed some of it to the devil-may-care attitude the RAF seemed to display such as tearing up the bar or the club or drinking themselves silly. I didn't feel that one could do an adequate job in the cockpit when hung over, but the 4th Group seemed to think that the vision of the fighter pilot demanded such behavior.

QUESTION 4. As an "Ace," to what would you attribute your success--airmanship, luck, tactics, or a combination of

these? Why? Purpose: After establishing and collaborating the unit's success, individual success and each man's contributions to the unit become important. Did an individual's successful tally (five aircraft downed to become an "Ace") detract from unit teamwork and cohesiveness?

Colonel Zemke: I don't believe in the word luck. I would [rather] say "Destiny," consistent with devotion to the task of leading and commanding the 56th Fighter Group. I wouldn't say my ability to live 72 years isn't a matter of luck. Certainly there is a certain amount of luck in life but I believe what you make of it has a big part in the success or failure. This goes for leadership or life itself.

Certainly the aggressive tactics that the 56th developed, splashed down through its subordinates. In this respect I felt that an aerial commander must actually lead and demonstrate [his ability] to subordinates--to command in combat.

Colonel Gabreski: I would attribute my success to training, experience, judgment, faith, aggressiveness, and a lot of luck. Perhaps there are a few important factors that I have missed like teamwork, motivation, air discipline, communications discipline--this is all inclusive in training well to be a professional "knight" of the air.

Firing within range--200 feet or closer. From my early experience, I would commence firing at the Hun from 1,600 feet out with very poor results. The best I could do is damage the aircraft. I learned to discipline myself by early 1944. I would hold fire until I could plainly see the tail wheel on the Me-109 and the Swastika markings on the wing of the FW-190. I planned my attack so that I always had excessive speed over the enemy aircraft, and I would practically fly through the target and recovered my altitude in a tight corkscrew climb with throttle wide open. My wing man had to work hard to stay up with me--and always did.

In retrospect, I must give credit to my past experience with the 315th Polish RAF Squadron operating out of Northolt, England.

I was assigned to the Polish unit for training at a time when American fighter groups were still nonexistent in England. This gave me an opportunity to fly with a combat seasoned group of pilots that date back to September 1939. Flying combat with this tremendous experience [the Polish fighter pilots] for three months instilled tremendous



confidence in me, and of course, taught me many basic principals of survival as well as offensive tactics. This I passed on to the pilots of the 61st Squadron and the 56th Fighter Group.

Colonel Mahurin: I did pay a lot of attention to the combat reports of other pilots in other groups because a lot could be learned from them. They often had a different perspective than we did, having been in a different area of the sky during a big battle. It seemed to me that I could get a better feel for the overall picture by digesting these reports than I could by just knowing what we did. I got my first victories just this way. In addition, we got intelligence maps on which were overlays of the routes the German fighters had taken during our escort missions. I believe these were radar plots of the courses of the German fighter showing from which bases they had taken off, what their flight paths were and where they had returned. These were also very useful because I could anticipate where I might expect enemy action and in what numbers. I don't know if the other people used this information in our briefings before we took off. My impression is that they were rather highly classified and only a few of us got to read them. This seemed to be because our side didn't want us to divulge that we had this information in the event we were shot down. Nobody was supposed to know that we listened to them or (I guess) they listened to us.

I really don't know what attributes made an ace. I only know what went on in my head at the time. During the time I was learning to fly, I was very serious about it. I REALLY WANTED TO KNOW HOW TO FLY WELL. When the other guys were out buzzing the beaches or the golf courses or their gal friends' houses, I practiced pylon eights or acrobatics or instrument flying. I like to fly formation and I was bound and determined to be better than anyone else at it. Stateside, the theory had always been to conserve the engines. We took off at about half power because this is the way the peace-time Army Air Corps did things. It was more or less unheard of to stress the engines at any time. As far as I know, I was the first pilot in my squadron to ever try flying the P-47 at full throttle. I believe I was also the first to discover that the P-47 wouldn't run at negative G forces. I tried to make coordinated turns upside down one day only to have the engine freeze on me because it wouldn't pump oil. This could have been fatal to a lot of pilots if the engine company hadn't fixed it on later models.

Whenever we trained the most enjoyable thing was mock dog fighting. Rat racing took a close second. This was

great sport and hard work at the same time. Still there was nothing better than to beat the other guy by getting on his tail. The best thing of all was to lurk high above the home field and jump other pilots as they took off. This required good spotting ability and certainly was excellent training. I was terrible at aerial gunnery both in England and at home before I got to England. No one seemed to be able to do it and certainly no one could explain how it was done. We just didn't seem to know. By the way, I found out early on that the pilot who went to absolute full throttle first was going to win in the dog fight.

The bottom line to all of this I guess was that I knew I could fly the P-47 well, I was learning tactics based on what I read and what I actually saw the enemy doing and I thought I had a pretty good feel for what was going on around me in an actual air battle. I don't recall ever flying in Hub Zemke's flights although I am sure that he led my squadron from time to time. I don't ever recall his taking a hand in my training. It seemed to me that we did all of that on a squadron level. I guess I trained my flight members in actual combat more than any other way because we always went over each flight in detail after we got back from a mission. This was on a flight basis because I lived with members in the flight. During this period I had a couple of razzle-dazzle dog fights with both Me-109s and FW-190s and it seemed to me that I didn't have much trouble out-flying them. This is a great confidence builder. One more thing, I had had a mid-air collision in England and had to bail out of a P-47. After that, I knew how to use a parachute. That also leads to a very small amount of security...knowing that the thing will actually open and lower you to the ground if you really need it. In the final analysis, it seemed to be an element of luck in being where the German fighters were. I went on a lot of missions where I didn't see anything and other guys were fighting off in the distance. Being in the right spot at the right time certainly helped, but there was no fixed way to make all of this happen on every mission. I went on a couple of missions where I was the only person in our group to even see an enemy aircraft. I have no idea how or why this happened.

QUESTION 5. What is your assessment of the leadership in the 56th during the survey period? How did the 56th combat leadership (1943-1944) compare to other noncombat unit leadership? Were there similarities between the combat leadership of the 56th in the ETO and combat units in the Korean War? Purpose: To examine or assess 56th leadership from three distinctive levels of command; to compare combat

unit leadership to non-combatant units (if available); and finally, as two of the participants (Gabreski and Mahurin) were group leaders in Korea, to explore similarities or differences between World War II and Korean combat units.

Colonel Zemke: Now as a leader of the 56th and later the 479th, I would like to point out that 90 percent of the ideas for tactics, etc.--though put out by my office--were not mine alone. A commander gets credit for most of these new innovations but he gets them for the most part from his subordinates or influence from lateral contacts (other groups--schools--lectures, etc.).

You don't know how many skull sessions I had with my Flying Deputy Operations Officer and squadron commanders before arriving at some decisions. In this respect, I insisted on military discipline at all times. Rarely did I break down to party with subordinates, or inordinate drunken orgies or heated arguments.

As to the noncombat units that were assigned to the 56th--they became an integral part of the command. Several commanders who couldn't keep up with the pace were fired. Their chemistry and mine didn't work out.

When recognized, certain "Song Birds" were ultimately removed from the role of the active combat pilots of the 56th and the 479th.

I firmly believe there is no difference in the combat leadership of the 56th in the ETO to the same role with the combat units of the Korean War. Combat is combat--wherever encountered.

It takes determination--guts--and training to carry you through these missions. For the most part this combat leadership isn't developed on the Golf Course or at the Friday evening "Happy Hour" at the Officers' Club.

Colonel Gabreski: see response to assessment question #2

Colonel Mahurin: When you ask about combat leadership, I think the job of the leaders was to get all of us into a position where the enemy could be encountered. When we actually got into combat the Group broke down into individual flights or even elements, so there was very little a group leader could do to give any direction. Squadrons seemed to take on the personalities of their commanders more than groups and I suppose flights do this even more so. In England, I was usually rather upset with our leadership because it seemed to me that every time I was

out in front in regard to the number of victories scored, I was either taken off operations to make speaking tours in London or to run a training unit for incoming pilots. Just as soon as some other pilot in some other group would come within one aircraft of equalling my record, I would be put on operations again. Since my job was to shoot down enemy aircraft, it didn't make sense to me to be in a noncombat capacity.

When we first got to England, my view was that I would be really lucky just to get to meet a couple of the RAF Battle of Britain aces. They were all heroes to me. One man stood out, a RAF Wing Commander named Dizzy Allen who had 20 victories. He let me fly a Hurricane and I let him fly my P-47. He wasn't very impressed; but neither was I, I thought the Hurricane was a real dog. I also ran into another RAF Group Captain who was an ace and a wing commander. His name was Jamie Jamison, one of their really big time leaders. Very impressive. Way before we went into combat I became friends with an Australian Flight Lieutenant named Ian McRichie. Ian took pity on us because we were so green and he decided to help me. He arranged to boresight the guns in my aircraft so they would converge at 300 yards.

Mind you, this didn't come from our group armament officer or from any of our regulations, this came from a man who knew what he was talking about from actual experience. Ian also gave me a couple of rear view Spitfire mirrors to mount on either side of my windshield. He finally gave me a RAF leather helmet, goggles, and oxygen mask which were all better than those we had been issued.

None of this really helped me to gain confidence, but still our people should have known all about this and it shouldn't have come from a couple of lowly pilots like Ian and me.

What got me started was the "Gang Loyalty" aspect. I had always been associated with a group of 23 men of my own age when going to school in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We were close knit and always stuck together. We had a football team, and a basketball team and were always involved as a social group in normal grade and high school activities. It was here I guess that I developed a sort of "what is good for the gang" mentality. This really came into play the first time I saw enemy aircraft attacking our bomber formations. All I could think of was that, "They are hurting our boys" and I instantly went to attack without thinking of anything else. Up to then I had really been scared silly to go into combat, but the peer pressure kept me from quitting just as it would have in front of my old

gang. When I saw the Germans for the first time, it never occurred to me to be scared, I just wanted to get even with them.

This was the first time to actually see a German fighter. Once this came about, the fear of unknown sort of went away, and I began to realize that this wasn't too much different from rat racing over Long Island, only this time the other guy could shoot back. Shortly, after the first mission to see Germans, I ran into some more and shot down a couple of them. This was great for morale. In addition, members of my flight were involved and so it was a boost for more than just me. I never once even thought about being an ace, the idea in war was to win it and I found myself helping. From then on, I really wanted to shoot down Germans. I can't explain the thrill, I guess nobody can. All other sports, such as big game fishing and hunting, are totally insignificant compared to actual aerial combat.

In my experience, things were different in Korea...very much different. We only had two F-86 groups/wings flying against the MiG-15s while I was in combat so there was a great deal of rivalry. There was also a difference in length of mission time, so there were always a number of pilots finishing up a tour and others arriving. Plus that most of the pilots had plenty of flying experience and many of them had been in actual combat before. In addition, there weren't many places to go after the missions had been flown. Essentially we were just doing fighter sweeps trying to keep in between the dive bombers who were going after selected targets in North Korea and the enemy fighters trying to get at them. When I got to Korea the two F-86 units were rendezvousing and flying into enemy territory pretty much as we did during WWII. This was wrong because aircraft in close formation became excellent radar targets and flying close formation tended to use up a lot of fuel. We didn't have enough fuel as it was. We eventually took off in flights of 4 with a 5-minute interval between flights just so we would have aircraft on patrol in the target area for a longer period of time.

Aerial combat in Korea was different too because it was pretty easy to shoot down an enemy aircraft providing we could get in range. In fact our combat average at the end of the war was about 14-to-1. In my view (also shared by the technical intelligence community) the F-86 was superior to the MiG-15 in almost every way. All of this leads to a great deal of confidence. Although we were outnumbered at all times, we felt rather safe and this will really enhance the "go get 'em" attitude. In addition, there were a lot of people flying F-86s who recognized that shooting down enemy

aircraft would result in good effectiveness reports and good press.

In Korea, at least while I was there, there was a lot of competition between the 51st Wing and the 4th Wing. Who could fly the most sorties and get the most victories was an important part of the game. We both listened to each others' radio transmissions. We competed for such things as in-commission rates, pilot readiness and so forth and of course we read each other's combat reports. All of this contributed to what I felt was high morale in spite of sub-standard living accommodations. Our leadership was different too. With Gabby, we usually conducted informal seminars in our "Wheel House" quarters to go over strategy, and we invited any pilot who had engaged the enemy to participate. Whatever was learned from these sessions would be a part of the briefing the next day. The Officers' Club/Bar wasn't too exciting so there wasn't much problem with the guys drinking although a few did it to excess. The bottom line was a little closer contact with the pilots on the part of those in command than I had remembered during WWII. With the 51st, I was sort of "on loan" and didn't really have an opportunity to take an active part in command functions although I did lead the wing from time to time.

When I got to Korea thinking I would only be there for a short period, I flew on Gabby's wing for my first dozen or so missions. He had been in combat up North and knew essentially what was going on and I didn't. However, it was a great challenge for both of us to fly perfect formation and to get into the MiGs as much as possible just to show the young sports we could do it. We wanted to make sure that the whole Wing, enlisted as well as officers, knew we had pride in what we were doing so they would take pride in what they were doing for us. I believe it worked out well.

When I took over the 4th Group, I could do a little bit of commanding. This meant bucking up maintenance, training, and above all armament. Remember my comment about boresighting. We boresighted the guns on a regular basis because we found they tended to go out of harmonization. We did a lot of morale building things such as creating a baseball field and so forth. Once a week we would fly in an Army band called the Seven Dukes of Rhythm to play in the Officers' Club for our pilots to enjoy. Booze was very reasonable. I would try to get all three squadrons together in the Club and start by making each pilot contribute \$1.00 to the kitty to buy drinks for everybody. This was usually more than enough to get singing started and we would have a good evening swapping songs, stories, and lies. It seemed

to me that we were a lot closer to each other than I remembered being in England.

In a final analysis, I believe units take on the personalities of their commanders. In the 4th Group for example, the 334th Squadron was commanded by a rather conservative officer. As a result, the squadron was conservative. Their paperwork was always well done, their Readiness Building was always neat and the squadron area was always well kept. But they didn't score as many victories as the other squadrons. The 335th Squadron was really raunchy. Their readiness room was always a mess and their people always looked like they needed pressing. But they were the ones who got into action the most and at one period had one hundred percent in commission for 16 days. The 336th Squadron was in between, both in victories and behavior. In all three cases the squadron commanders were just like their squadrons. I found this in England too. So I would guess that this is a measure of leadership. If the leader has "guts" his unit will also have "guts."

QUESTION 6. In your opinion, what is combat leadership? Are we born with it, or can we be trained? How important is it to "lead" from the front? Why? Purpose: To get a common definition of combat leadership from three successful combat leaders; if there is combat leadership, can future leaders be trained; finally, to examine the importance of leading into combat.

Colonel Zemke: I do not necessarily believe that we are born with combat leadership--but if this is the ultimate goal, the exposure to combat with continued emphasis and training toward those ends--make for combat leaders.

How important is it to lead from the front? Answer: Very, very important. I recall on the first 10 missions leading the Group...it was a case of me pulling a frightened, jittery lot of junior fighter pilots into combat while they pushed me into flying deeper into enemy territory.

If you break or show fear to your subordinate comrades...you've lost.

I found that to fly with a protective flight well above the fray was--NO GOOD! Likely as not the attacks or combat soon got away from itself. Often as not directing by radio--I found there wasn't time or the short directives were misinterpreted.

I therefore insisted that I lead the attack--into the enemy formation--across the airfield (front) --down the railroad track--across the enemy defenses. Having been hit on 12 different occasions by the enemy--I found that no subordinate could say--he subordinated the "dirty work."

I also agree that a commander can ultimately burn himself out; therefore, I'd say the policy of placing commanders in command when over 32 to 35 years (of an active combat unit) is an error. The commander of an active combat unit must be checked out and capable of operating the equipment (aircraft) he commands--not just bore holes in the sky.

Colonel Gabreski: What is combat leadership? Are we born with it?

No, we are not born with it. It is developed through flying and training in the specific aircraft. We must learn to fly the equipment and become completely aware of the environment in which we are to operate. At the same time, we must know the adversary and the limits of his capability. Only through professional flying and training can one become a combat leader. Professional leadership is only an ultimate step of professional airmanship, coupled with aggressiveness, judgment, keen eyesight and understanding the capabilities of your wingman, element leader, flight leader, and the makeup of the entire team.

Or put in another way. Combat leadership is the state of mind that has been developed to carry out a war-time mission that you and your unit were professionally trained to perform.

Colonel Mahurin: Bottom line. Leadership involves personality. You must be out in front to lead. It is best to be able to do the job as well or better than anyone else if you want men to follow you into the jaws of death. A difference in rank won't do it either. You can order a pilot to go into combat, but you can't order him to engage the enemy. He has to want to do it and it is better if he can follow the leader's example. In almost every unit it is possible to identify about 10 percent of the pilots who will be yellow and will either go along for the ride or will turn back before entering into enemy territory. On the opposite end there will be about 10 percent who will be the shooters, people who can be counted upon to carry a mission out to the fullest. The group in between will just be going along for the ride. I suppose much of this would change if we were fighting over our own country for our own loved ones. As



long as we fight for something less than total victory, these percentages will be about right.

The closing comment on the survey left open the option to add any comments or information the three aces felt were relevant to this project; e.g., Colonel Zemke included autobiographical data he felt would help explain why he feels the way he does. Their extensive responses to this survey are compared and analyzed in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Five

### COMBAT LEADERSHIP--LESSONS LEARNED

Please remember that my recollections of World War II came from the perspective of a captain fighter pilot with the 56th Fighter Group....My answers to your various questions come from that perspective. However, they are tainted by following experiences as a squadron, then group commander during World War II, and then a group commander during the Korean War.

Colonel Walker M. "Bud" Mahurin, USAF (Ret)

#### Part I SUMMARY

Colonel Mahurin's comment is indicative of the insight provided by all the survey respondents, each with a unique perspective based on their particular level of leadership. Although their responses do not provide a universal definition of combat leadership, they do produce a composite profile of a successful combat leader. In addition, the responses offer two interesting revelations. The first is that all three respondents chronicled the importance of leading from the front. The significance of this statement is that it collaborates more notable examples of great leaders that led from the front. Heinz Guderian, Erwin Rommel, George S. Patton, and Georgi K. Zhukov are a few examples of professionally successful military men at the front in combat. The other revelation, and perhaps the most enlightening, is the lasting impact a successful combat leader has on his troops. As commander of the 56th Fighter Group, Colonel Zemke hoped his leadership had "splashed down" throughout his Group. Walter Lippmann wrote, "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him the conviction and the will to carry on." (New York Herald Tribune, April 14, 1945) Colonel Zemke passed the Lippmann test. His leadership had "splashed down" throughout the 56th Fighter Group. Colonel Gabreski's and Colonel Mahurin's survey responses attest to this conclusion as well as profile the Group's combat leadership, from top to bottom. The first question supplemented historical records and helped the participants focus on their leadership roles.

The response to the first survey question was succinct. When asked about their formal or informal leadership roles,

the participants added little new data to the already available historical records. However, as Mahurin pointed out, their responses did cover an excellent cross section of leadership perspective from the top down. The limited information about their leadership positions was compensated for later in their survey responses. One example of this additional data is where Gabreski credits Mahurin's informal leadership for improving the 63rd Squadron's combat effectiveness. A very definite leadership profile emerged when the participants used personal experiences to define combat leadership.

The leadership trait responses provided unique insight into combat leadership of the 56th Group. In fact, the universality of these desirable traits makes them as applicable for future combat leaders as it was to the 56th's leaders. All participants listed aggressiveness as an important combat leadership trait. Zemke combined the "desire to excel" and "flying skill" with aggressiveness to profile the necessary elements of effective combat leadership. According to Gabreski, "Zemke did have an aggressive, positive attitude." In addition to aggressiveness, Gabreski identified positive attitude, flying ability, teamwork, courage, air discipline, and judgment as leadership traits. The captain flight commander, Mahurin, listed the desire to lead, leading by example, and "gang loyalty" as his leadership traits. The top-to-bottom profile of the effective combat leader would be an aggressive, proficient leader whose strong desire to lead is compatible with the teamwork required for success in combat. Did these traits contribute to the success of the 56th Fighter Group?

"One of the more important keys to success is teamwork. To acquire teamwork in a unit you must train and fly with the men." Gabreski explains further that training and flying together [squadron level] allows the commander to know his men and their ability, and the pilots to know the commander. This emphasis on training is a recurring theme when the participants recap the Group's success. Zemke said that "We trained more...[and] we studied more how to defeat the enemy than any other fighter group." According to Mahurin, this training allowed the Group to capitalize on combat opportunities to successfully defeat the Luftwaffe in aerial combat. Therefore, the 56th was led by effective combat leaders who stressed the importance of training. It was this combination that made the 56th so successful in combat. An interesting point here, when asked about the effect the competition with the 4th Fighter Group had on their success, each man had a different perspective to offer. The group commander said it was very important, the 61st squadron commander said there was no effect, while the 63rd flight leader didn't remember any special competitive

feelings. This nonconclusive variety of responses points out how differently three levels of command can view a single external factor. This Group's success produced 47 aces. Did individual success detract from the unit's teamwork?

The three aces attributed their individual aerial success to the Group's aggressive tactics and training. This training meant professional competence on the ground as well as flying proficiency. Mahurin's ground study of combat reports, boresighting his guns, and mock dog-fighting [practice aerial combat] gave him the essential training to capitalize on his combat opportunities. Success in aerial combat for Gabreski was attributable to training, aggressiveness, experience, judgment, faith, and a lot of luck. He further suggested to become a "professional knight of the air" training must involve teamwork, air discipline, and motivation. Their general consensus why the Group was so successful in combat centered around training for this opportunity. These plentiful opportunities were attributed to destiny, or as suggested by Zemke--luck. Their aerial combat success, provided by these opportunities, was primarily attributed to training. This situation is similar to a well known story told about Lee Trevino. After sinking a 45-foot putt to win a major golf tournament, one of the reporters asked Lee how it felt to be so lucky, sinking that decisive long putt. Trevino turned to him smiling and said, "You know it's a funny thing about luck--it seems the more I practice, the luckier I get." Survey question number five supports the premise that leadership was the impetus behind the emphasis on training.

When asked to assess group leadership and compare that leadership to noncombat units, the three participants responded with candor. In addition, they also compared the similarities between combat leadership in World War II and the Korean War. As commander, Zemke expected the same from his combat and noncombat units. As to the Korean War, he says, "I firmly believe there is no difference between combat units in [the] European Theater of Operation and Korea. Combat is combat--wherever encountered. It takes determination--guts--and training to carry you through these missions." On the other hand, Gabreski's assessment was incorporated in his response to question two in which he commented on the whole group. He does credit the Group leadership [commander down to wingman] with instilling the teamwork, discipline, and judgment necessary for combat. Mahurin emphasized the different personalities and experience of the Group's leaders. He suggested that the 56th's mixture of experience and aggressive personalities contributed to its success against the Luftwaffe. The interaction of this mixture developed the Group's "gang loyalty" while instilling confidence in the pilots.

Although Gabreski doesn't talk about Korea, Mahurin's extensive assessment provided a very interesting residual to this paper. When Mahurin went to Korea, he was on loan to Gabreski's 51st Wing so he was able to observe, firsthand, Gabreski's leadership. Later, Mahurin would command the 4th Wing and enter into a friendly competition with the 51st Wing. It is interesting that in World War II Mahurin couldn't remember the competition with the 4th Group (and Colonel Zemke, the commander, could) but now, as a commander himself, Mahurin encourages the competition. His assessment of leadership in Korea, now as a commander, differs from his earlier thoughts as a "captain flight commander." Mahurin says, "In a final analysis, I believe units take on the personalities of their commanders....I found this in England too. So I would guess this is a measure of leadership. If the leader has 'guts' his unit will also have 'guts.'" In Korea, as commanders, Gabreski's and Mahurin's combat leadership emphasized the same traits that made Zemke and the 56th Group successful. Training, aggressiveness, proficiency, and teamwork were the watchwords for the commanders of the 51st and 4th Wings in Korea. Although not carbon copies of Zemke, both Mahurin and Gabreski led their wings similarly to their mentor. In fact, their combat personalities were a learned item--and their answers to the last question collaborates that analysis. What is combat leadership?

"Combat leadership is the state of mind that has been developed to carry out a wartime mission that you and your unit were professionally trained to perform." In addition Gabreski says we are not born with combat leadership--but it is developed through training. Mahurin's "bottom line [is that] leadership involves personality. You must be out front [literally and figuratively] to lead." Be out front in your training and study of tactics as well as being the leader into the fray, because the troops will follow the leader's example. Finally, Zemke points out that we are not born with the ability to be successful combat leaders. "But if this is the ultimate goal, [then] the exposure to combat with continued emphasis and training towards those ends [will] make for combat leaders." He adds that it is essential to lead from the front, into combat. "I recall on the first 10 missions leading the Group...it was a case of me pulling a frightened, jittery lot of junior fighter pilots into combat while they pushed me into flying deeper into enemy territory."

## Part II CONCLUSIONS

Study leadership and the profession of arms. The military has a long tradition of leadership. Read about the successful leaders in our history and how they led. Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote, "The study of history lies at the foundation of all sound military conclusions and practice." Detailed professional knowledge is essential to developing perspective and in preparing to meet the challenges of the future.

AFF 35-49, Air Force Leadership

This paper preserves, for future study of leadership, personal reflections of three highly successful combat leaders and aces. Colonel Hubert Zemke's, Colonel Francis S. Gabreski's, and Colonel Walker M. Mahurin's candid survey responses provide invaluable insight into combat leadership. Their insight provides two significant historical perspectives. The first lists leadership traits that profile a successful combat leader. The second examines the impact a leader has on his subordinates.

Leadership in the 56th Fighter Group made it the most successful fighter group in the European Theater of Operation in World War II. A profile of that leadership, from top to bottom, was provided by three of the Group's most successful leaders. They list aggressiveness, training, teamwork, professional competence, opportunity, and leading from the front as essential traits for successful combat leadership. The figurative and literal reference to leading from the front is possibly the most important leadership trait. One significance of leading from the front is its impact on subordinates.

Colonel Zemke's leadership of the 56th "splashed down" to his subordinates--Colonel Gabreski, commander of the 61st Squadron, and Colonel Mahurin, flight commander in the 63rd Squadron. Evidence of this can be found in the style of leadership adopted by Gabreski and Mahurin when they became wing commanders in the Korean War. It is no accident that their leadership style, commensurate with their personalities, emphasized the same traits that made Colonel Zemke and the 56th successful in World War II. It is this impact that makes the study of successful leaders essential in the development of future leaders.

General Charles A. Gabriel said in the forward to Air Force Pamphlet 35-49, Air Force Leadership, "Those of us in leadership positions have a responsibility to develop and support the high quality people who will lead the Air Force in the 21st century. I challenge each of you to prepare yourself for leadership, and take the time to teach those

who will follow you." This paper will help future leaders develop and prepare to meet their responsibilities in the profession of arms.

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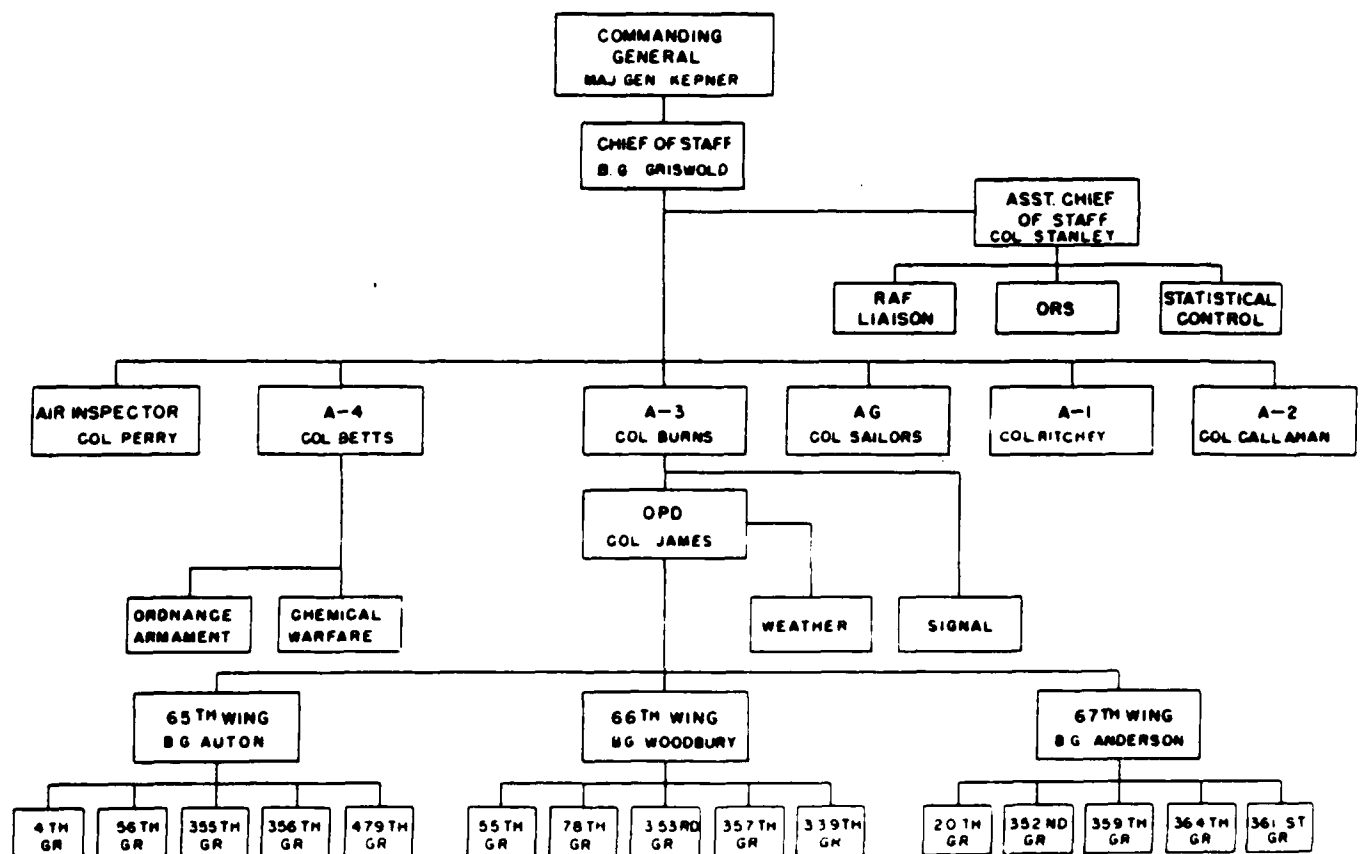
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# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

### LINE DIAGRAM VIII FIGHTER COMMAND

#### VIII FIGHTER COMMAND OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION



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## APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX B

#### GROUP SCORES OF THE 15 FIGHTER GROUPS OF THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE

<u>Group</u>	<u>Air</u>	<u>Ground</u>	<u>Total</u>
4th*	550	466	1,016
56th*	679.5	327	1,006.5
355th	356	504	860
352nd	493.5	273	766.5
353rd	340	405	745
357th	586.5	110	696
78th	330	343.5	673.5
339th	234	399	633
55th	305.5	255	560.5
364th	261	194	455
20th	205	227	432
479th	155	277	432
359th	247.5	110	357.5
361st	219.5	132	351.5
356th	193	77	270

\*Scores of the 4th and 56th Groups are final and officially confirmed. The other 13 group scores may vary slightly from the final, official tally, but very little.

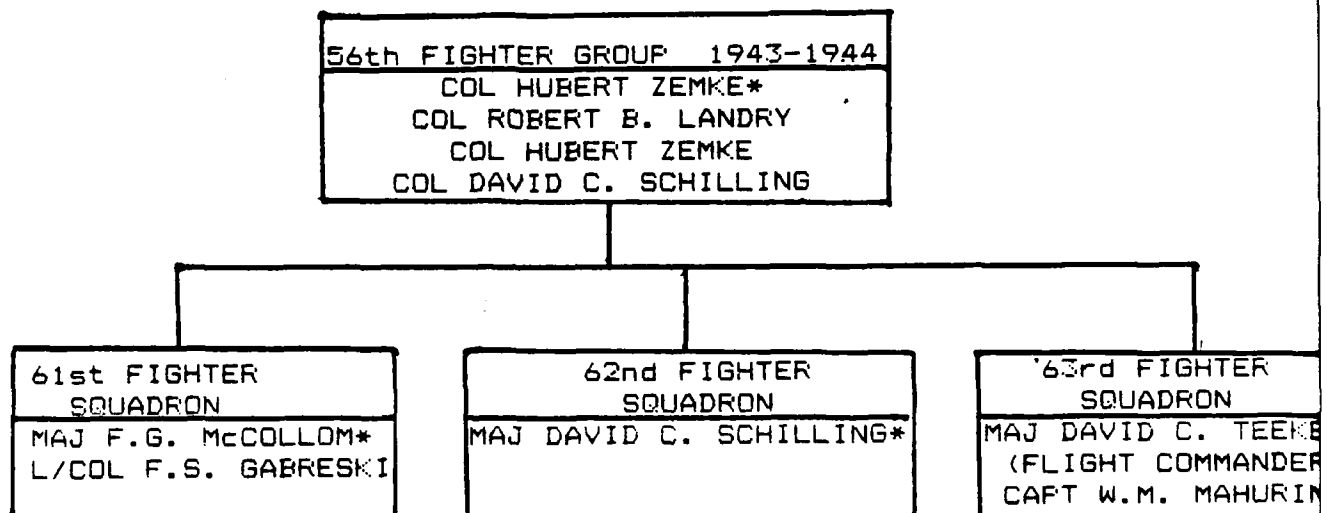
Official group scores as published in The Official History of the 4th Fighter Group, 1000 Destroyed, by Captain Grover C. Hall, Unit Historian.

## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX C

#### LINE DIAGRAM 56th FIGHTER COMMAND

#### OPERATIONAL ORGANIZATION



\*Organizational structure when the 56th was established in the European Theater of Operation.

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## APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX D

#### P-47B THUNDERBOLT

Manufacturer: Republic	Combat ceiling: 42,000 ft
Wing span: 40 ft 9 in	Max speed: 429 mph at 27,800 ft
Length: 35 ft	Combat radius: 550 miles
Height: 12 ft 8 in	Armament: eight .50 inch
Weight: 13,60 lbs (combat)	machine guns
Engine: 2,000 hp Pratt & Whitney	

In June 1940, as England's toehold on the Continent vanished, the US Army requested that Republic develop a successor to their P-43 aircraft. The needs of the Army required a totally new design--an aircraft capable of carrying eight 0.50 inch Browning machine guns. The XP-47B was a heavy, large-nosed brute, a far cry from the sleek Spitfires and Me-109s of Europe. However, whatever it sacrificed in beauty, the P-47 gained in lethal firepower and durability. The Army Air Corps ordered 774 P-47B and C models from Republic in September 1940. The first P-47 flew on 6 May 1941 and by the end of 1942, two American fighter groups were equipped with the P-47B. As American pilots gained combat experience with the P-47, the Germans gained quick respect for the Thunderbolt and its murderous firepower. The P-47B's main shortcomings were its limited range and restricted pilot's view--these would be improved in later versions of the Thunderbolt. Pilots who flew the "Jug" (the nickname for the P-47) were confident in its combat capabilities and scored more kills in the P-47 than any other American plane in World War II.

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## APPENDIX

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### APPENDIX D (CONTINUED)

"Keyworth Blue Leader" Francis Gabreski in his  
56th Fighter Group Jug.





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